

Issues in Business Education Programme: Challenges to National Transformation

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Abstract

Transformation engenders change, and change denotes a departure from the old order to a new one. National transformation therefore implies fundamental change in the building block of a nation; change in the social, economic, infrastructural and political landscape of a nation. For transformation to be achieved, it must encompass all levels of change and development from economy, to social, education political and even cultural orientations. In order to achieve this much talked about transformation, education must be given its pride of place in which business education is an integral part. It is on this premise that this paper ex-rays issues in business education as they pose challenges to national transformation. It is however recommended among other things that experts in Business education should be immediately drafted into the curriculum review to ensure that the contents to be recommended and taught are in tandem to what is obtainable in the modern day organizations practices to deliver national transformation assurances.

Keywords: National Transformation, Business Education, Curriculum, Change

1. Introduction

Transformation actually means a complete change from one situation to another, a total departure from the old order to a new one. Transformation does not come accidentally, but requires deliberate effort. To change from a failure to a successful person call for performance of some activities that will facilitate the actualization of such dreams, transformation call for practical action and go beyond mere expression or verbal pronouncement, but require a number of tasks to be performed. Transformation is a concept that has been diversely defined by scholars of different backgrounds and orientations. It is a fundamental shift in the deep orientation of a person, an organization, or a nation, such that the world is seen in new ways and new actions and results become possible that were impossible prior to the transformation (UNDP-LDP, Cited in Asobie, 2012). National transformation therefore implies fundamental change in the building block of a nation; change in the social, economic, infrastructural and political landscape of a nation. Education is a potent vehicle for national transformation. It is a veritable platform for youths to realize their intellectual potential, develop their abilities and follow their aspirations. Education broadens opportunities and builds capacities; education determines the kind of future any nation wants to have. Nigeria and indeed any nation's future socio-economic success will depend on the ability of its people to deal with a global environment that is knowledge driven. Education is the key and bedrock for sustainable transformation.

2. Concept of Business Education

In order to be able to understand the concept of business education, it would be necessary to look at the definitions of business education in the past and present time. This is because technology has helped to change definitions of certain things. It therefore, implies that business education, as a course of study has to move with time. Popham (1975) said when a group of people were asked what business education is? The reply was as follows: A business executive replied, "Business Education is education to produce goods and services". A radical retorted: It is the avenue to make enormous profit. One teacher responded: Economic concepts necessary for living in a business economy. Another teacher answered: Learning skills to enter a business or distributive job. A person on the street said "Shorthand and typing, that's it". After looking at the different views of business educators, Popham came to a conclusion that: Business education is a course that prepares students for entry into and advancement in jobs within business and it is equally important because it prepares students to handle their own business affairs and to function intelligently as consumers and citizens in a business economy. Nolan, Hayden & Malsbary (1967) defined business education as those business programmes and courses taught ordinarily at the secondary school level. Osuala E.C. (1989) defined Business education as an essential part of the preparation of youths for life and living. In 2004, Osuala, gave another definition as a programme of instruction which consists of two parts (1) Office education - a vocational programme of office careers through initial, refresher and upgrading education and (2) General business education - a programme to provide students with information and competences which are needed by all in managing personal business affairs and in using the services of the business. Still on the definition of business education, Njoku (1997) defines business education as that facet of educational training that helps the individual to acquire relevant skills needed for living. However in 2006 Njoku gave another definition as an educational programme that equips an individual

with functional and suitable skills, knowledge, attitude and value that would enable him/her operates in the environment he/she finds himself/herself. It can be seen from the foregoing discussions that as the years go by; the definitions of business education continue to change. This means that business education is not static. Therefore any worthwhile programme has to move with time. However, business educators have always accepted that change is a fact of life. From the typewriter to the transistor, business curriculum has continually shaped itself to meet the needs of business. As a result, the success and survival of business education constantly depends on its ability to adapt and keep pace with the needs of its recipients. These changes present challenges for both the learner and instructor. Nevertheless, it is the business educator that must be willing to adapt and manage these challenges to ensure successful programs for the future. It is essential that business education be a useful and vital component of transformation agenda if the curriculum of business programs across the country is to continue to meet the needs of its students.

3. Importance to the Nation

- Business Education is important to the nation because more people would have skills that can make them ready employers of labour. Dependence on the nation would be minimized as people become job creators.
- As people develop proper values towards work they tend to contribute more economically to the nation. For instance, the nation is divorced from violence, sexual immorality, pride, corruption and examination malpractice among others.
- As individual citizens become judicious spenders, the country gains by way of investing excess resources on meaningful projects that would lead to economic development. Today, we are talking about poor infrastructural facilities in our educational and health systems, this can be avoided if we spend wisely.
- If one understands one's right as a citizen of a country and enforces them the country would have less to worry about but would rather devote more time and resources on development.
- If citizens of a country develop sound moral value then the country will be free from insecurity and peace will reign supreme. More people will invest in the country and there will be increased in growth and development.
- Business education has made it possible for those who want to be retrained in order to upgrade their skills and have access to education. In this way, people who finish secondary grammar school with no saleable opportunity skills will have to acquire skills that make them become functional, through retraining programmes.

From the points raised here it is important to embrace business education because it prepares you for the world of work. First you are free to take up teaching and second, to become a business man.

“Examine the table below and appreciate the ways the different Business Education subjects can play important roles in your life.”

Roles of Business Education

Subjects	Objectives
1. Book keeping	- accurate keeping of financial resources records - understanding ways of recording business transactions - improving arithmetical skill/develop basic skills in arithmetic
2. Office Practice	- understanding the different filling system - able to retrieve information easily - able to set different office machines design forms etc
3. Business Communication	- write mail-able letters - able to deal with customers by using the appropriate word - speak fluently - able to write developed convincing letters
4. Business Mathematics	- able to work out trade and cash discounts - able to convert numbers - able to multiply, subtract, add etc with ease
5. Secretarial Duties	- able to develop human relation skills - use initiative tact - handle major office routine duties - know the importance of been honest, punctual etc.
6. Marketing	- acquire effective sales habit - able to analyze situations
7. Word Processing	Accurate processing and management of information

4. Business Education and National Transformation

Business Education has been defined in several ways, most of which highlights its vocational nature. It is a form of vocational education that is directed towards developing the learner to become productive in teaching, paid employment and self employment (Idialu in Amoor, 2010). Business education prepares beneficiaries for gainful employment and sustainable livelihood. It is generally seen as education for and about business. It is an education that provides knowledge and understanding of the economic, financial, marketing, accounting, management system and other branches of business endeavour. Hence, education about business prepares students to function intelligently as consumers and citizens in a business economy. Amoor (2010) however noted that business education plays a significant role in the economic development by providing knowledge and skills to the learners, thereby, enabling them to adequately impart knowledge into others, and handle sophisticated office technologies and information systems. Since the primary goal of business education is to produce competent, skillful and dynamic business teachers, office administrators and businessmen and women that will effectively compete in the world of work; it can then be opined that business education is an impetus and sine qua non to national transformation because economic development usually engenders national transformation. Business education primarily centers on preparing people for roles in enterprises such as being an employee, entrepreneur and employer or self employed to guarantee economic development and thereafter, national transformation. Rufia, (2013) indentified vocational and technical skills and competence as critical success factors in the actualization of Nigerian Vision 20:2020 which is about Nigeria becoming one of the first 20 economies in the world by the year 2020. Business education holds the prospect of contributing, through its job creation and self-employment packages, for the attainments of vision 20:2020. A gainfully employed individual contributes to GDP per capital; reduces poverty and unemployment which are some of the indices of development that national transformation is rooted and striving hard to achieve. There is no gain-saying the fact that a well trained business educator can guarantee national transformation as opportunities are available to be engaged in any of the following areas:

- Teaching profession from secondary to university level depending on qualification
- Business enterprise – as a promoter, manager, marketer, account clerk, secretary, word processor, sales representative, broker and majorly as a owner (qualification is also considered here).
- Proprietorship of private business and commercial schools and institutes

5. Issues in Business Education

Inadequacies in the Curriculum Content of Business Education: the content of business education curriculum has been reported as inadequate at all levels. An example of such could be seen in a study by Njoku, 1997 on tertiary institutions, Njoku (1997) on Junior Secondary Schools and Nwosu, 1999 on private secondary schools. Most of the courses do not cover the scope of knowledge and skills required for the effective preparation of business education teachers today. Highly needed courses are not available in the curriculum. Typewriting, Administrative office management and Transcription are not included in the curricula of some institutions. Such inadequacies in the curriculum could lead to the production of half-baked graduates. That is, they would not acquire the necessary skills for effective performance. Such teachers cannot compete with business education graduates elsewhere. A probable reason for the above inadequacies may be that business education experts and relevant stakeholders are not often invited to participate during the development of the curriculum. Today, some ministries handpick people to develop the curriculum for teachers at certain levels. This could generate lots of problems, not only for the institutions, but also for their products.

Non Relevance of the Course Content: a business education programme should include courses that would prepare the student for saleable skills, help them have an understanding of the economic system and how a business operates. It was also to be geared towards helping people to acquire knowledge, and attitude/value that would enable them function in the world they live. To this end, subjects that would meet the objectives set or goals must be in the content of the curriculum. A good curriculum should also be geared towards helping the students to acquire knowledge, attitudes and values that would enable them function efficiently in the world of work. To this end, subjects that would meet the objectives or set goals must be included in the curriculum. Again the content of traditional business education curriculum is geared towards the choice of the person at the head. In this regard therefore, should the curriculum include all the knowledge and skills needed for the programme or should it include all those needed to be acquired while on the job?

Poor Implementation of the Curriculum: today the training of business educators tends to tend to deviate from what is contained in the curriculum: Industrial training is no longer carried out the way it was originally done. Should the ITF allow students to look for places to do their industrial attachment or should the college provide them with establishments for SIWES? This is a critical question for discussion. Should the institutions visit the students to find out whether they are properly placed or should the students report back to the school on how they were placed?

Time allocation: another aspect that shows inadequacies is the time allocated to the subjects on the school timetable. In some schools, Njoku (1997) and Nwosu (1999) observed that inadequate number of hours allotted to business education subjects at all levels was considered a major issue that needed proper attention.

Selection of Subjects: at the different levels of education, the selection of subjects to be offered was to a large extent influenced by the person at the head, the time (space) available on the time-table and the competence of the teachers available in some cases. For instance, in most vocational schools, office practice; shorthand; typewriting; commerce and book-keeping were offered, but a few others offered secretarial studies as a major course. Although the state ministries of education approved the courses for them the schools were still selective in what they teach. At the JSS level, business education subjects are put under Group B as Vocational electives. This becomes a source of concern to all of us. Nwosu (2005) reported that not all the schools studied offered most of business education subjects. This can show that the programme at this level is not uniformly taught by schools.

Current issues and debates: a lot of discussions are currently going on as to why people in related areas of business education should not be allowed to teach core business education subjects. The following arguments were put forward by some business educators: that business education is highly specialized hence should be taught by experts who possess the required skills. That no matter the residual skills acquired by non-experts in core business education, they are not qualified to teach, since they are not professionally qualified in the business teacher education. The following were put forward by those in related areas: that those in related areas studied courses like personnel management, office management, typewriting and others, hence, are competent to teach the subjects; that having studied business education at the NCE and HND levels before branching off is enough to qualify one to teach business education; that having studied economics or educational management at the Bachelor's degree level and then Business education at the master's level is adequate to be admitted into the profession. The teacher should take a stand immediately on issues and debates of this nature in order not to block critical thinking in students. It is a way of accommodating all the learning styles-theorists, pragmatists, activists and reflectors as well as the different teaching methods.

Qualification and quality of teachers: A Business education teacher is a person who holds a degree in business education from a recognized University or an NCE (National Certificate of Education). Holders of NCE from the recognized colleges of education in business education are competent to teach the five components of the JSS business studies programme. He is a person who is constantly aware of the state of art in Business Education and has a thorough knowledge of the requirements of a business education programme. The business education teacher has to have 3 qualifications. Business qualities; personal qualities for him/her to do the job as a trained business education teacher and professional qualities, i.e. a business education teacher should belong to a professional association. But what do we have today? Uncertificated business teachers that are not professionally trained and faking of non-existing professionals for the purpose of gaining accreditation status.

Facilities: facilities for teaching and learning in any programme are usually given a prominent position in the field of instructional technology. Just as Nolan said, it is not possible to achieve the objectives of a well-designed programme without adequate facilities. This means that facilities must be adequate and functional. Facilities in Business Education are as important as the business education teachers. The facilities you will need for your business education courses would depend on:

- the content of each course.
- the objective of the programme for each course
- in some cases the method of teaching.
- the level and number of students.
- adequacy - this means that facilities needed for instruction must be capable of taking care of all those who need them. For instance, in a class of 30, 36 computers must be made available. So that the teacher would have 1 for demonstration and the rest would be left as stand-by.
- relevant - how relevant are the facilities to the course content and objectives as well as societal needs?

6. Conclusion

Business education remains the foundation of human resource development which provides knowledge, skills, attitudes and understanding needed to perform in the business world as a producer or consumer of economic goods and services that business offers. To ensure national transformation as being emphasized as slogan on daily basis, there is immediate need to tackle the challenges of business education programme headlong to pave way for the fulfillment of its roles in national life.

7. Recommendations

- Only qualified (certificated) business educators should be employed at all levels to teach in business educational programmes. While the unqualified ones already recruited should be trained especially in the use of ICTs skills needed for the programme.
- Students enrolment to the programme should be checked to ensure students with no background in the programme do not find their ways.
- Teacher-student ratio of 1:30 should be reviewed to 1:50 and strongly maintained to cope with the reality of the day.
- Computer laboratories should be established, well furnished and properly networked for teachers and students to take full advantage of shared educational resources.
- Experts in Business education should be immediately drafted into the curriculum review to ensure that the contents to be recommended and taught are in tandem to what it is obtainable in the modern day organizations practices to deliver national transformation assurances.

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